

Learning to Hunt

Hosting a hunting-
based outdoor skills
event in your
community



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Station
6

Come to Your Senses

Come to Your Senses

Sharpening your senses for the hunt

Participants learn to sharpen their senses before they set afoot in the field to hunt. They also learn how animal senses come into play during the hunt.



Station 6

Come to Your Senses

Learning to Hunt

Objectives

Participants shall:

state how both human and animal senses play a key role in hunting.

demonstrate how to walk quietly while hunting.

describe the value of camouflage to both animals and hunters.

describe the value of blaze orange to hunters.

describe how scent can be detected by animals and why hunting into the wind is important.

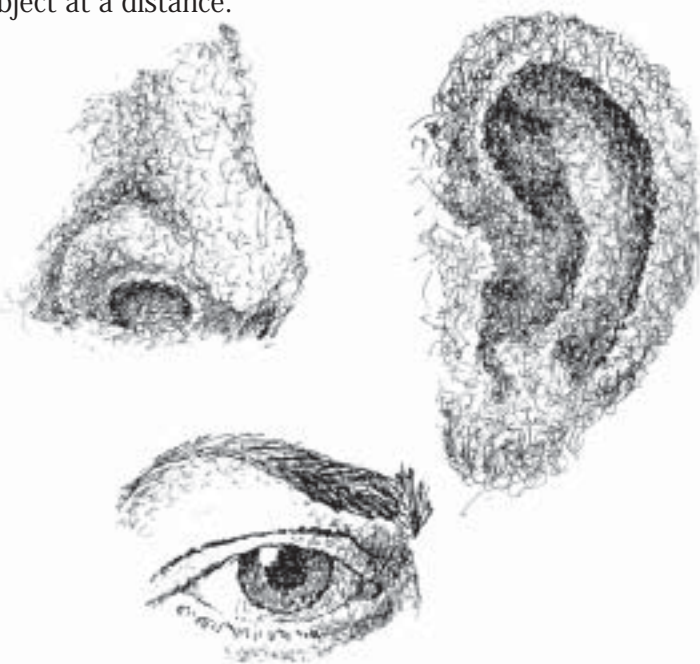
describe the effect of parallax on a hunter's ability to zero in on an object at a distance.

Equipment

This station has five related activities. Each of the following activities has its own list of equipment.

Station Setup

Each of the following five activities has its own directions for station setup and activity procedures.



Powers of Observation

Equipment

- 18" x 24" cardboard
- 5" x 7" poster board
- Several strips of poster board to fit on smaller card
- 4" x 6" piece of felt
- 1 small piece of sponge or foam rubber
- 1 bottle of quick-drying glue
- 1 thick-nibbed marking pen
- 1 bottle of essential oil of cinnamon, wintergreen, clove or peppermint
- 1 ball of string or twine
- 1 pair of scissors
- 1 clipboard, paper and pencil per participant
- 1 large tray with a dark cloth that covers the entire tray
- Assortment of a dozen natural items such as leaf, stone, feather, twig, acorn

Station Setup

Make a large cardboard sign, about 18" by 24". Using a thick marking pen, write in large letters "Please Observe." Draw a downward-pointing arrow below the words. Punch holes with scissors through both upper corners, and thread string through to form a loop for hanging. Punch



two holes near center of bottom, about 6 inches apart.

Glue the 4" by 6" piece of felt to the front of the 5" by 7" piece of poster board. Turn this poster board over and glue several smaller strips of poster board to the back. Glue a tiny piece of sponge or foam rubber in the center of the back of this sign. On the felt side, glue a small strip of paper bearing the printed phrase, "Ah, Awareness!" Punch two holes with scissors through both upper corners and thread string through to form a loop for hanging.

Activity A



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Before your group arrives, saturate the sponge with the essential oil. Be careful not to let the oil strike through to wet the felt. The visual cue may give the trick away.

Hang or mount the large sign in an obvious place so your group will see it when they first arrive. Hang the smaller sign below the large sign, so it is approximately nose high for the average participant in your group.

Place the dozen natural items on the tray. Cover with the dark cloth.

Procedure

As you greet your group, have them walk past the large sign and sit down on the lawn or in the room. Give them plenty of time to read the sign and observe the small sign, but do not give them specific instructions to do so. When everyone is seated, hand each person a clipboard, paper and pencil. Ask them to describe the object of observation. Do not allow anyone to go back for a second look.

Note anyone who seems completely lost. There may be people who failed to notice either sign on the way in. Ask if anyone failed to notice the objects in the door area.

After a few minutes, collect the descriptions, or ask volunteers to read some of them aloud. Allow others to add to the descriptions or to dispute the content.

After the visual content has been discussed, ask questions to bring out what may have been missed by not using more senses. Did the sign make any noise? When they answer "No," ask how many of them wrote down that the sign was silent. How did the sign feel? Ask who felt the material. Did the sign have an odor? Females tend to notice odors more so than males.

Explain that humans are visual animals, and pay relatively little attention to how objects sound, feel or smell. Yet, to be the best we can be at hunting, we need to be aware of all the features of the world around us.



Gather a variety of natural objects for participants to describe.

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Next, bring out the covered tray you prepared with a dozen natural objects. Tell the participants you are going to test their abilities to observe and recall details. Ask them to gather around you in a circle. Place the covered tray in the middle of the circle and on the count of three, remove the cloth. Allow them about ten seconds to observe the items, then cover the tray again.

Ask participants to write down as many of the twelve objects they can remember, and to describe them in as much detail as possible. Allow participants to do this for five or ten minutes. Ask everyone to raise their hand. Next, ask those who remembered seven or more items to keep their hands in the air. Eight or more? Nine? Ten? Eleven? All twelve? Ask those who recalled all twelve items to read the items and the descriptions as you hold each object up for the group to see. How accurate was their recall?

*Tray of natural objects
covered with a cloth*



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Activity B

Learning to Hunt

The Sounds of Silence



Equipment

- 1 blindfold
- 1 chair or stump

Station Setup

Before participants arrive, find a place in the woods or a field to hold this activity. Make certain there is no poison ivy. Find an appropriate stump for sitting, or place a chair in the middle of the activity area.

Procedure

Explain to your participants that while not all forms of hunting require an excellent sense of hearing, many do. Pheasant and grouse hunting, for example, do not require as much quiet and concentration as deer or turkey hunting. In this activity, you will find that both the hunter and the hunted learn to become better listeners.

For the first round of this game, select one person to be a turkey hunter, hunting from a ground stand. Blindfold the hunter and seat that player on a chair or stump. The remaining participants play the role of turkeys, and should form a large circle around the hunter.

At your command, the turkeys begin sneaking toward the turkey hunter. When the hunter hears a turkey, have the hunter point at that turkey. The player whom the hunter points to must now sit down and be still for the rest of the round. Ask the hunter to point only when absolutely certain a turkey is heard. If the hunter starts “flash pointing” at imaginary sounds, the activity will not be worthwhile. You may also control this urge to “flash point” by limiting the hunter to only six opportunities to point out a turkey.

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The other players portraying turkeys keep proceeding toward the hunter as quietly as possible, until they are either pointed out or they reach the center. Instruct the turkeys NOT to touch the hunter. The blindfolded person is very tense and is concentrating on listening to the turkeys in the distance. The blindfolded person could be unpleasantly startled if



touched. Also remind the turkeys to resist rushing quickly toward the hunter. Their objective is to practice walking quietly.

After the first round, select someone else to be a deer hunter and repeat the process, with the other players assuming the role of deer. Participants will begin improving. Weather permitting,

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after a few rounds, ask the deer to remove their shoes. They will notice a remarkable improvement without shoes.

Discuss how the hunters tuned in their ears to the sounds around them.

Discuss how the deer and turkeys were most successful approaching the hunter. They should point out that they were most successful when they were:

placing their feet in areas where there were no twigs, dry leaves or pea gravel

stepping on bare ground when possible

moving during background noise created by the wind, airplanes, traffic, rain, etc.

standing downwind of the hunter, since noises tend to blow away



Color Me Safe!

Equipment

- 1 camouflage hat
- 1 camouflage coat
- 1 blaze orange hat
- 1 blaze orange coat

For the variations:

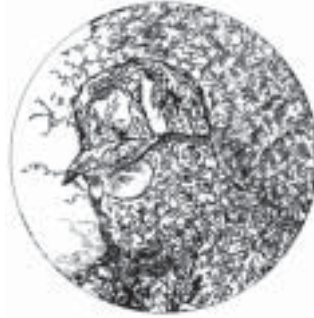
- Camouflage paint
- Camouflage head net, gloves
- Different colors of camouflage clothing
- 4" x 6" index cards
- Paper and pencil for each participant
- Thick-nibbed marking pen
- Flip chart or chalkboard with chalk

Station Setup

Select a wooded area, especially a thicket or another place with lots of vegetation.

Background Information

For hunters, the basic purpose of camouflage clothing is to break up their silhouette or outline. Game animals seem less disturbed and

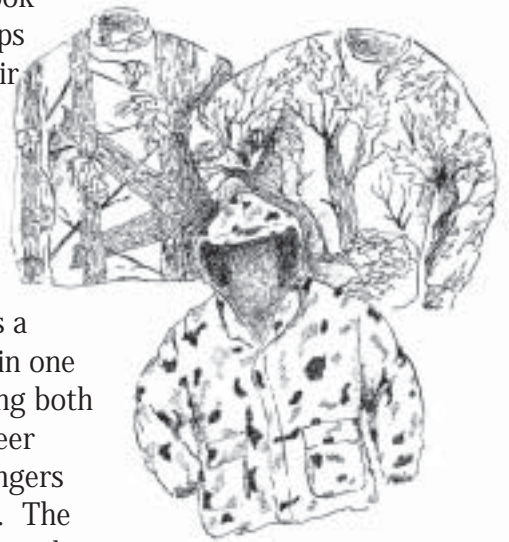


more likely to get close to a hunter when the hunter is wearing camouflage. If hunters want to be as completely camouflaged as possible, they should consider covering up their hands and face in some fashion. The eyes and eyelids are important, as well. Observing a fully camouflaged hunter who does not have camouflaged eyes reveals flashes of light with each blink. At close range, this is enough to spook game. Camouflage also helps animals hide them from their predators, including human predators called hunters.

Procedure

Designate one participant as a Deer. Have the Deer stand in one spot and look down, covering both eyes with one hand. The Deer should raise one or more fingers of the other hand overhead. The remaining participants assume the role of hunters. During this first round, the hunters will be dressed in their own clothing. Give them one minute to hide in the woods. The hunters cannot completely hide from the Deer. They must be able to see how many fingers the

Activity C



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Deer is holding up. After the hunters are hidden, the Deer must stand in that one spot and locate as many hunters as possible. The Deer can squat or lean, but cannot move from the stand position. When the Deer sees a hunter, ask the Deer to point out the hunter and describe what the hunter is wearing (for example, "I see the hunter dressed in a blue shirt, with glasses and black pants.") Hunters who are spotted move to the sidelines.

After two minutes or when the Deer cannot see any more hunters, have the Deer again cover both eyes and raise one or more fingers overhead again. The hunters who are still hidden are given 30 seconds to find another hiding spot fifteen paces closer to the Deer. The Deer now opens both eyes and tries to spot the hidden hunters. The Deer must still stay in one spot while leaning or bending to see better.

Repeat the process until only one or two hunters remain hidden. As they move closer, they will be easier to find, so two or three rounds are all that is necessary.

Ask the participants what made the hunters hard to see. They should mention clothing color, use of cover, distance from the Deer, size and use of sight barriers.

Now, to demonstrate the effectiveness of blaze orange in

allowing hunters to keep an eye on each other, have two volunteers come forward. Place a camouflage coat and hat on one volunteer and a blaze orange coat and hat on the other. Have the rest of the group line up along the edge of a woods or cornfield. Ask the two volunteers to stand about three feet apart and to walk slowly into the woods or field. Ask the rest of the group to yell, "Stop!" when they can no longer see the person in camouflage. Have the blaze orange volunteer continue to walk forward until the group yells, "Stop!" as well.

Compare the distances at which the two types of clothing can be seen, and explain why Wisconsin



law requires gun deer hunters to dress in blaze orange. Ask the group what they think happened to the number of hunting accidents when the blaze orange law was enacted. Ask them why grouse and pheasant hunters should wear blaze orange hats and vests, but why turkey, duck and bow deer hunters should dress in full camouflage. Ask them to predict, based on the types of firearms used and the typical dress that is worn, which sport is potentially the most dangerous.

Variation:

Have several volunteers from the group put on various types of camouflage clothing (brown leaf, green leaf, tree bark, tiger stripe, snow camouflage, etc.). Have some put on camouflage gloves, head nets and camouflage paint. Have others leave their hands and faces uncamoouflaged.

Give each volunteer an index card with a large number written on it. Ask the rest of the group to turn their backs while the volunteers go and find a hiding place within a designated area. The volunteers must be able to see the rest of the group. That is, no volunteer should completely hide behind a tree, rock or log. They must be within view of the group. Send the remainder of the group, the hunters, to find as many hidere

(15 to 30 minutes in a large area, less in a small one). Hunters should carry pencil and paper, and move through the area quietly and alone, trying to find the hidden individuals. When a hunter spots a hider, he or she should indicate this by pointing to his or her own eye with a forefinger. The hunter should take care not to reveal the position to anyone else. The found person should quietly flash the assigned number to the hunter, who writes it down.

After the time has expired, call everyone back to your location. On a flipchart or chalkboard, record which hunters found which numbers. Analyze which hidere were found most often, how they were found, and how the camouflage helped.



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Activity D

It Doesn't Make Scents!

Equipment

- 1 bottle of cologne, air freshener, bottled animal scent, or an ammonia soaked rag
- 10 pieces of blaze orange flagging per person

Station Setup

Find an open field where there is some brush as well as plenty of open space for participants to walk around. No other preparation is needed.



Background Information

An animal's job is survival. Deer, rabbits, foxes and even domestic dogs use their noses to gather information about what's going on around them. Animals are very aware of new smells or changes in the strength of existing smells.

Mammals use their sense of smell to tell them things like:

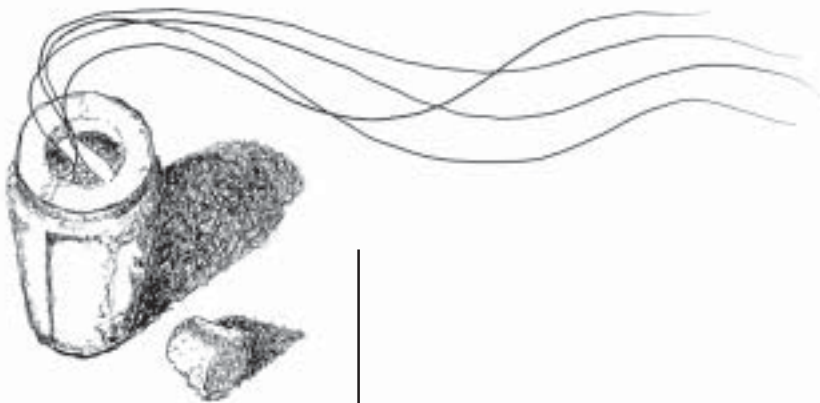
what foods are available and where they're located

when a human or other natural predator is upwind from them

what other individuals, male or female, are traveling in their territory

when adult females are at a receptive stage for mating

Since game mammals, such as deer, rely so heavily on their sense of smell, it's extremely important that hunters have a basic understanding of smells and how deer are likely to react to them.



One good whiff of a person, and most mammals - especially deer - bound away. Even in areas where wildlife and humans coexist, the scent of a human in a place where it normally isn't will cause a flight response in the animal. Just as wind carries the odor of smoke, air currents carry human scent downwind. When stalking a deer or sitting in a tree stand, any deer downwind from you will likely pick up your scent and flee.

Smells have a life. Once deposited, they weaken as time passes. Deer can often evaluate the smell and determine when it was deposited, and then act accordingly - either intercepting or avoiding the animal - if that animal sticks with a pattern. Hunters, however, can disrupt the expected pattern. By knowing how to use hunting scents, a hunter can improve the odds of encountering the animal sought.

Several different types of scents are available for deer hunting. They include:

Natural Scents

These scents are produced by the same type of animal the hunter is pursuing. They include urine scent, gland scent or a scent from some other part of the animal. A deer smelling this type of scent interprets it as the presence of another deer.

Sex Scents

The most popular deer-hunting scent is the "doe in heat" urine scent. These scents are actually collected from captive does in heat, bottled and sold to deer hunters. During rut, a buck will be sexually attracted to these scents.

Territorial or Challenge Scents

The scent used in these cases is usually the urine, tarsal gland musk or other excretions of a buck during rut. When a buck in rut wants to find and breed with a doe, he often goes to scrapes (places where bucks have scraped away the ground under a hanging branch) hoping to find the scent of a doe in heat. If, instead, he finds the scent of another buck, he becomes agitated.

Hunger or Food Scents

A deer spends a great deal of time searching for and eating food. The right food scent can be very effective. Some food scents are more attractive than others. A good scent to try is one that mimics the food that is currently on the deer's natural menu. Most food scents are made from natural plant derivatives.



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Curiosity Scents

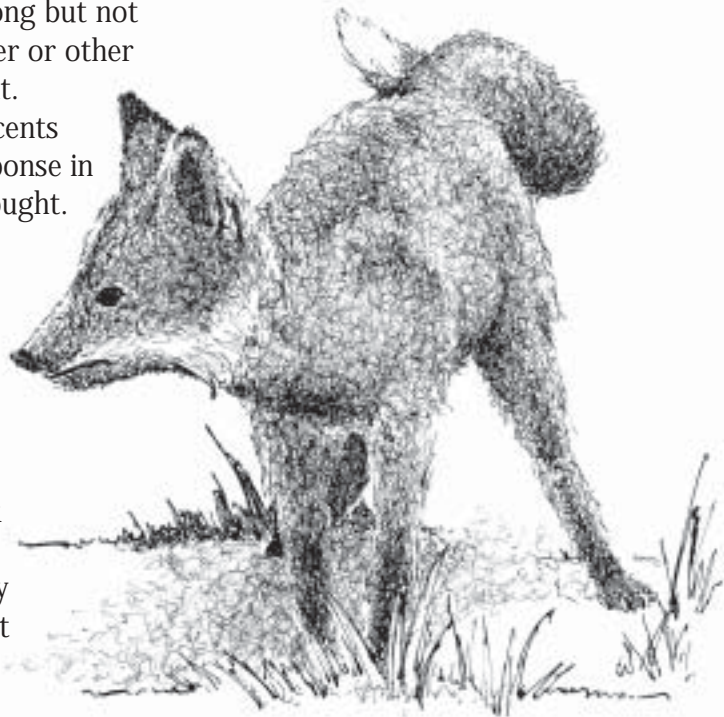
Some smells are not from a deer or a food item, but from something totally different which really appeals to deer. Curiosity scents can vary greatly in their impact on deer. The best way of determining that impact is through field testing.

Cover Scents

These scents, from plant extracts or from the urine of other animal species, help mask human scent. These scents don't have high attraction qualities, but they hide human odor by putting another strong scent in the air. A cover scent is usually strong but not offensive to the deer or other animal being sought. Sometimes cover scents produce a fear response in the animal being sought. Some of the better scents for deer hunters include red fox urine, raccoon urine, and various plant derivatives.

When hunters walk into the woods to hunt deer, they may leave a trail of scent from their boots, which were contaminated with various smells from their car or camp. As they brush against weeds and

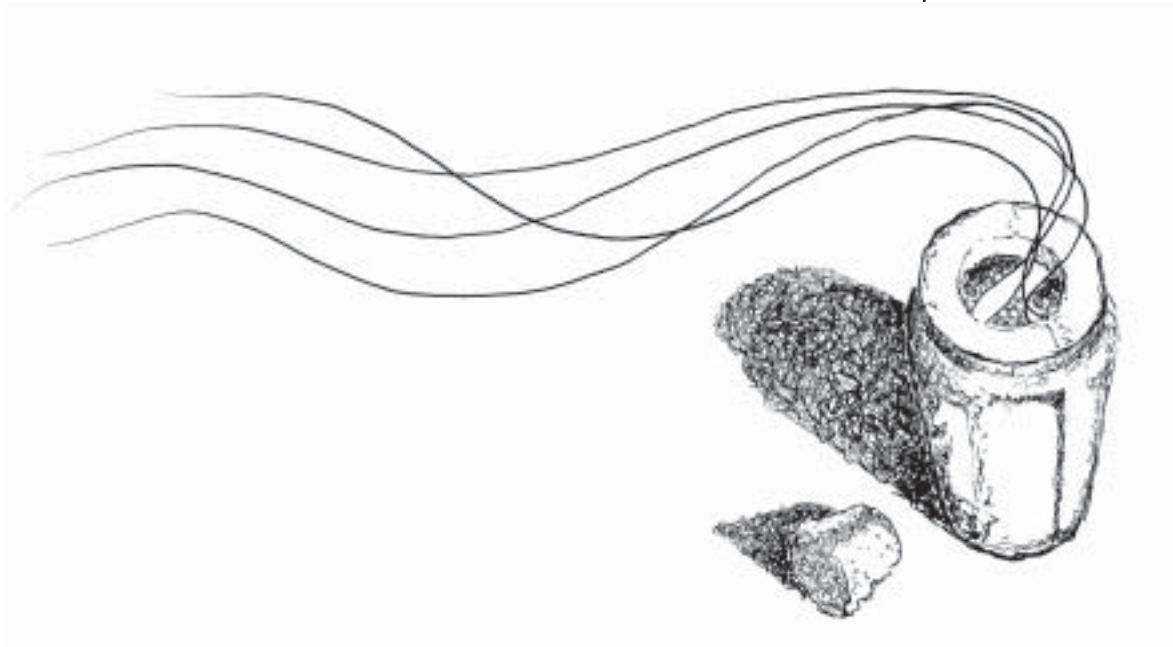
brush, they leave behind scent from their clothes and hands. Hunters should try not to touch weeds or brush with their bare hands. The less they touch the surrounding vegetation with their clothes, the better. Rubber boots deodorized with non-scented soap minimize human scent on the ground better than any other footwear. Walking through a shallow stream with rubber boots helps wash off foreign odors. Hunters should tuck their pants into their boots. After a hunt and after drying off wet boots, hunters should store their boots in clean air, or in an airtight container such as a plastic bag, to keep them clean and odor free.



Procedure

Hand each participant ten pieces of blaze orange flagging. Take participants to a woodlot and have them stand in a circle about 50 yards away from the center. Have them close their eyes and turn their backs away from the center. Open a bottle of animal scent, pull out an ammonia-soaked rag, or spray some cologne or air freshener straight up into the air.

Have participants turn back toward the center and open their eyes. They should not see the source of the scent. Ask them to begin walking slowly in a large circle, spiraling towards the center. If they sense (don't say "smell") anything unusual, have them raise their hands and hang a piece of flagging onto the vegetation in their general vicinity. Participants should continue walking in a circle toward the center, hanging their flagging as they sense something unusual. If possible, conduct this activity under different wind conditions.



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Activity E

A Trick of the Eye



Equipment

- 1 ruler or flat strip of wood per two participants
- 1 target with a large piece of white paper per two participants
- 1 roll of masking tape
- 1 very light pencil per two participants
- 1 cardboard box, about the size of a copier paper box.
- 1 utility knife
- 1 rifle
- 1 4X big game scope
- 1 1" .22 scope

Station Setup

This activity should be conducted at a shooting range. Tape the piece of blank paper to a target. Cut a notch in the cardboard box to hold the rifle absolutely still.

Background Information

Parallax is the tendency of an object to seem to change positions when viewed from different locations or angles. In shooting, it accounts for the differences in sights. Most telescopic sights are set to be parallax free over a certain range of operating distances; and a few, primarily target and varmint scopes, are designed to be focused or parallax compensated for the distance over which the shot is being made. This can be demonstrated in several ways.

Procedure

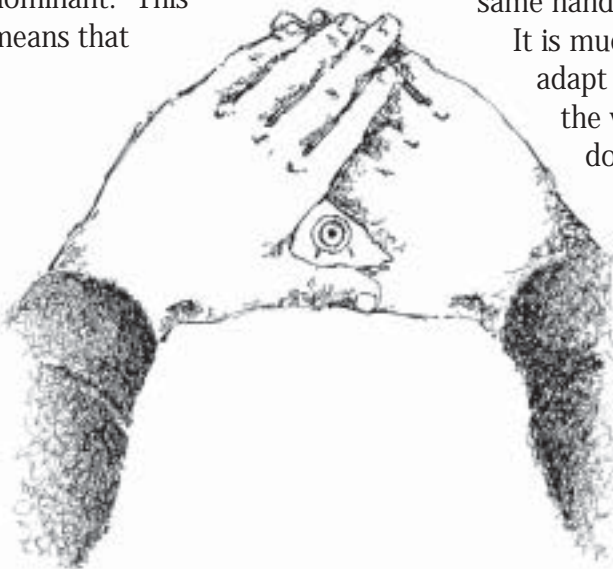
Ask everyone to stand facing the targets down range. Have them look at a target with both eyes open, and stretch out an arm to point at the target. Then have them close their left eye. Is their finger still pointing at the target? Have them open both eyes and continue pointing their finger at the target. Now close their right eye. Is their finger still pointing at the target? Did the target move?



Did their finger move? What happened? What would have happened if the target had been a deer and they went to shoot the deer with one eye closed versus another eye?

Now have each participant look at the target with both eyes open. Have them hold their arms outstretched with palms open and facing away from them. They should cross their hands so that their fingers overlap and their thumbs overlap each other. This should form an open triangle between their thumbs and forefingers. Ask them to keep both eyes on the target and then slowly bring back their hands to their face.

Most participants will find that their hands naturally come back to their right eye. This means they are right-eye dominant. Most people are right-eye dominant. This means that



when both eyes are open, their right eye dominates their vision. Hunters should look through a rifle sight with their dominant eye. Most people who are right-handed are also right-eye dominant.

When shooting a rifle or a shotgun, a right-eye dominant hunter should place the right cheek on the stock and sight down the barrel with the right eye. A left-eye dominant hunter should place the left cheek on the stock. No matter which eye is dominant, hunters should shoot shotguns with both eyes open.

Some hunters also keep both eyes open while shooting rifles, especially those rifles with open sights. Some hunters are cross-eye dominant, which means they may be right-handed, but their left eye is dominant. Young cross-eye dominant hunters should be encouraged to shoot with the same hand as their dominant eye.

It is much easier for them to adapt this way, than to force the weaker eye to become dominant.

Now, with participants working in trios, ask one of the partners to sight down the flat side of a ruler and look at the center of a blank piece of paper taped onto the target. Ask that one of their

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partners stand by the unmarked target and make a very light pencil mark on the paper where the “shooting” partner says the stick is pointing. Mark the paper with a small dot and place the shooter’s initials there.

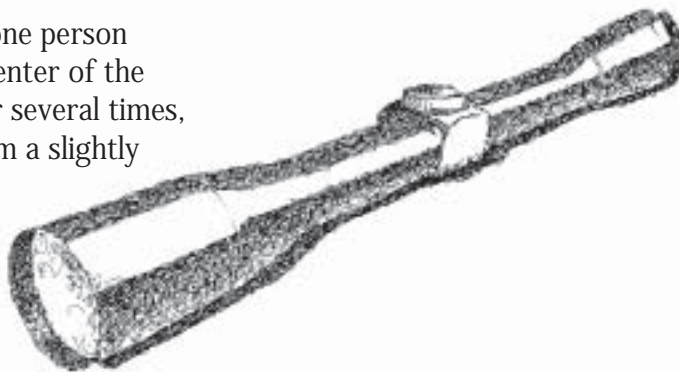
Next, have the third partner stand at the end of the ruler on the side of the dominant eye of the shooter. This will force the shooter to look from a slight angle through the eye that is not dominant. Now have them tell their partner where they are pointing at the center of the paper. This new point should be off both horizontally and possibly vertically from their first point. Discuss how the apparently straight line to the center of the target led to two different points.

Alternatively, have one person sight down to the center of the blank piece of paper several times, each time sitting from a slightly different position. Again, there should be a horizontal and vertical scattering of points. Ask participants how this would affect their shooting success.

Place a rifle (action open and empty) in the notch cut of the cardboard box, and aim it at a

blank piece of paper 50 yards away. Tape the box in place to keep the rifle absolutely stable. Have a member of the group sight in the following six ways: right-eyed, left-eyed, head back to maximum eye relief, head forward to minimum eye relief, cheek to the stock and cheek off the stock.

Mark the six sight-in spots with fine pencil dots. Using a low power (4X) big game scope at its minimum focal length should give an effective illustration. Try the same exercise with the target at 100 yards. Compare the difference in the two results. Try the same process with a 1" .22 scope of the same power or a scope with variable parallax correction. Was there any difference?




End of Teaching Station

References

4-H Shooting Sports Hunting Curriculum, edited by Ronald Howard, Jr. and James E. Knight. (curriculum guide).